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Leadership And Strategic Teams – 3 Keys To Development

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By Daniel Wolf



In many organizations, strategic teams have become essential forces of growth, performance, and change. They represent specific experience and expertise. They provide the unique capacity to drive strategy integration and execution. They serve as critical resources in the “middle spaces” of organizational structure. What separates effective teams from those that struggle? What are the key principles of team leadership and team trust? What makes teams — and the work of teams — such powerful engines for developing talent-rich organizations? Good questions — and the answers can be found in three key themes for team development.

MAKE PEOPLE THE AGENTS FOR IMPACT

People engaged in the right roles on the right teams become the agents of making strategy happen. Engagement is obviously a big deal. Engagement of strategic teams means individuals have a strong sense of commitment, purpose, interaction, respect, influence, enthusiasm, and accountability for getting important things done. People who are especially attentive to the organization’s strategic agenda are better equipped to move the needles, pull the levers, and drive the impact. These individuals and teams become part of the system for strategy execution.

DESIGN TEAMS FOR INTENTIONS AND EFFORT

Choosing teams for sandlot sports is the informal metaphor that guides effective strategic team design. Effective team design reflects several key roles — the organizer and arranger, the expert or specialist, the integrator and improviser, the navigator and pathfinder, and the operator and task checker. Team design also reflects the social dynamics, trust, energy, power, cause, support, interaction, and conflict of individuals working together, in collaboration and in contributor mode. Teams that are designed for adaptation are shaped by readiness, situation savvy, and persistence. Teams that are designed for compliance are shaped by standards, processes, and controls. Effective team design affords the cultivation of ideas and stories that give an organization the “impact forces” that ensure strategy results.

PEOPLE DEVELOP WITH TEAM EXPERIENCE

The learning and development processes in organizations today draw a lot of energy from the experience that individuals gain from their work in strategic teams. This can become an experiential journey in a learning and development laboratory, where individual hard skills and soft skills are actively forged and fostered. Experience with different kinds of teams — process teams, crisis teams, insight teams, advance teams, platform teams, and many more — is experience that shapes the very essence of the organization’s talent pipeline. Taking aim at strategic teams as organization development vehicles is a strong, value-added practice for leaders at every level. Individuals learn a great deal by interacting with others in strategic teams built for results.

Our ongoing research with strategic teams and development suggests that organizations with disciplined approaches to the development and leadership of purpose-driven teams are pushing the boundaries of productivity, innovation, and transformation. In many ways, strategic teams are the new structure and the next frontier for driving progress and impact, both near- and long-term.

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